

GROVE SCHOOLS, RAYLEIGH – SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOLS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members that, as part of their safer routes to school programme, Essex County Council have suggested that parents taking children to the schools in Grove Road should park in the car park serving Grove Road Playing Fields and walk children through the woods back to the schools.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Essex County Council has a policy of safer routes to schools that should improve the safety of children attending primary schools in the District. Works often involve improvements to footways, introduction of crossings and other safety features on the public highway.
- 2.2 The schools in Grove Road are located at the end of the road and parking outside the schools on the public highway causes serious problems both to residents and by increasing the danger to children crossing the road.
- 2.3 Essex County Council have carried out a full consultation with the school and parents on their proposals and the result has been that both the school and parents are in favour of the proposals.

3 THE PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The overall proposal is to help relieve parking on the public highway by encouraging parents to park in the recreation field car park at the end of Grove Road and then walk back through a section of Grove Woods to Grove Road and hence the school.
- 3.2 Detailed proposals are as follows and are shown on the attached plan (Appendix B):
- To resurface the car park and feeder road with compacted planings to a depth of approximately 100mm.
 - To install 2 x hinged lamp columns with anti vandal shields and connect to adjacent supply.
 - To install 'Dragons Teeth' posts to provide a safe area for children to wait for 'walking bus'.
 - Replace posts in car park where missing.

- To install rural footway through wooded area to Grove Road.
 - To redress, seed and install posts along the verge in Grove road to prevent further vehicle overruns (wooded side).
 - To install, as appropriate, trees (5) to improve visual appearance of Grove Road (opposite the school).
- 3.3 The proposals also seek agreement from Rochford District Council to continue the maintenance of the car park and footpath to the new standard.
- 3.4 The proposal does not include any provision for a crossing patrol, as the 'walking bus' would have to cross Grove Road to access the school. This would cause a potential vehicle / pedestrian conflict, which needs to be resolved.
- 3.5 The proposal also does not include any lighting to the pathway through the woods. If it is felt necessary to provide lighting to the car park, then some illuminated bollards should be provided along the length of this path. A request to Essex County Council to install these bollards as part of the scheme may be required.
- 3.6 Photographs of the Car park, Grove Road and the access road are included as Appendix A.
- 3.7 The Case for the Scheme**
- 3.7.1 Clearly any proposals that make access to schools safer for the children are to be encouraged. These proposals will help relieve the on-street parking which causes a problem outside so many schools.
- 3.7.2 There would be improvements to the car park and access road, including new lighting within the car park, paid for by Essex County Council. There would also be improvements to the public highway verges, which would prevent vehicle overrun and with some tree planting, improve the environment.
- 3.7.3 The suggested scheme includes a 'walking bus' which in the long term could encourage more parents to walk to school instead of driving. A 'walking bus' is an arrangement where parents and children gather and then walk to school in a supervised group.
- 3.7.4 A full consultation has been carried out with the school and parents and they are fully supportive of the County's proposal. This scheme can only work with the full agreement of the parents and school.

- 3.7.5 Keeping the highway outside schools clear of vehicular traffic is something that should be encouraged in terms of the safety of children attending the school.

3.8 Implications for Rochford District Council

- 3.8.1 Although the improvements to the road and car park would be welcome, the long term maintenance implications would fall on Rochford District Council. Although this is difficult to quantify, if this scheme was successful the daily wear and tear on the access road and car park would be extensive and would require an annual maintenance programme.
- 3.8.2 The scheme involves a new rural footpath through part of Grove Woods, which currently does not exist. This path would also provide additional pedestrian access to the car park and the playing field and would therefore be beneficial for pedestrian users.
- 3.8.3 Rochford District Council would bear the energy costs of the lighting and maintenance.
- 3.8.4 The area suggested as the meeting point for the 'walking bus' would also need to be resurfaced, increasing the area of hard stand within the Woodland.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The proposal would have a significant effect on the environment at the end of Grove Road, most of which is positive. However, the new footpath construction within the woodland area may detract from this area of woodland.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 All initial costs for the construction of the scheme will be met by Essex County Council. However, the proposal would require Rochford District Council to provide an increased maintenance budget from 2005/6, in order that the scheme is kept to a sufficient standard to encourage parents to use it, especially in times of bad weather.
- 5.2 This could be in the region of £500 per year, as the proposed surfacing may not withstand heavy usage, should the scheme be successful. Energy costs for the lighting would be minimal.

- 5.3 There is currently no budget for the additional work and this would need to be introduced into the budget process for 2005/6.

RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That Members consider the proposal as put forward by Essex County Council and decide whether to support the proposed scheme, with the inclusion of illuminated bollards along the path.
- (2) That Members agree that a budget bid be made for 2005/6 for the additional maintenance for this proposal.

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Background Papers:

None.

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APPENDIX A





APPENDIX B

